

**Statement of the Montana Quality Education Coalition
Before the Appropriations Committee
Of the Montana House of Representatives
In Opposition to House Bill 317**

EXHIBIT 2
DATE 01-26-2011
HB 317

**Mark Lambrecht
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Mr. Chairman and members of the Committee, *SAM, MASBO*

My name is Mark Lambrecht. I'm the Executive Director of the Montana Quality Education Coalition (MQEC). MQEC is a diverse education organization, representing AA, A, B, C and independent elementary school districts all over the state and education organizations such as the Montana School Boards Association, the Montana Rural Education Association, the School Administrators of Montana, the Indian Impact Schools of Montana and the Montana PTA.

Our mission is to help develop a permanent, reliable, predictable funding system for Montana's K-12 public schools.

We understand the sponsor's desire to give the Legislature greater control over spending on state programs, including K-12 school districts. However, MQEC must oppose this legislation on the grounds that it would remove much of the predictability school districts require for planning and lead to unwarranted reductions in funding.

I traveled to 26 Montana communities last year to talk to superintendents, trustees, teachers, parents and students about the effects funding reductions have had on their schools. Schools throughout the state are leaving teaching vacancies unfilled, increasing classroom sizes, cutting lunch programs and deferring needed building maintenance. Some schools have cut so much already; they're likely to fall short of the state's accreditation standards.

The state's share of school funding declined 12% between 1991 and 2005 and has seen minimal increases based largely on one-time-only federal funds since then. State spending on special education decreased 42% over the same time period. These decreases dramatically shift the burden of funding schools on local taxpayers.

Quite a few schools are finding creative ways to deal with the situation. A group of schools in southwest Montana have been collaborating for the past couple of years on a resource optimization project. These schools will create regional resource centers for schools to access a wide variety of services that are currently being duplicated. Schools will share the cost of many purchases, financial services, technological support, facility and construction planning and early childhood and preschool programs. While optimization of resources and increased efficiency are important, worthy goals, they will only take our schools so far.

We must find a way to fund all of Montana's public schools at a level that allows them to maintain facilities, buy textbooks and computers and most importantly—recruit and retain quality teachers.

Several legislators are already working with Montana school superintendents, trustees and education organizations on plans to develop the permanent, reliable funding system our schools need to provide a quality education for all students. Let's give them a chance to finish their work before we further limit their options with this legislation.

Please table this bill and help your colleagues find a solution for Montana's public schools.

**Statement of the School Administrators of Montana
Before the Appropriations Committee
Of the Montana House of Representatives
In Opposition to House Bill 317**

**Darrel Rud
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Chairman McNutt and members of House Appropriations,

For the record, I am Darrell Rud, Executive Director of the School Administrators of Montana and I would respectfully like you to consider our association's opposition to HB317 that would, according to its short title, "sunset statutory appropriations over certain periods." Mark Lambrecht from the Montana Quality Education Coalition has agreed to verbally support this stance to your committee.

Prior Legislatures worked hard to define quality education and make legislative and court approved changes towards adequately funding the state's share for this important segment of our democracy. Passage of HB317 and its accompanying possible implications for the stability and predictable school funding could result in devastating "unintended consequences."

Please Vote NO on HB317!

Respectfully submitted,

